

answer that there were just men on the earth who prevented him from speaking the truth, and gave that as the reason why the oracles which proceeded from his tripods were false. The "just men" were, of course, the Christians.

Diocletian yielded, only stipulating that there should be no bloodshed, while Galerius was for burning all Christians alive. Such is Lactantius's story, and it does credit to Diocletian, inasmuch as it shews his profound reluctance to disturb the internal peace which his own wise policy had established. As a propitious day, the Festival of the Terminalia, February 23, 303, was chosen for the inauguration of the anti-Christian campaign. The church at Nicomedia was levelled to the ground by the Imperial troops and, on the following day, an edict was issued depriving Christians of their privileges as full Roman citizens. They were to be deprived of all their honours and distinctions, whatever their rank; they were to be liable to torture; they were to be penalised in the courts by not being allowed to prosecute for assault, adultery, and theft. Lactantius well says '* that they were to lose their liberty and their right of speech. The penalties extended even to slaves. If a Christian slave refused to renounce his religion he was never to receive his freedom. The churches, moreover, were to be destroyed and Christians were forbidden to meet together. No bloodshed was threatened, as Diocletian had stipulated, but the Christian was reduced to the condition of a pariah. The edict was no sooner

* *Tabertatem denique ac vocem non habcrent (De Mori, Per sec., c. 13).*